

# Food Assistance



## Purpose

Food Assistance (FA), also known as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is a federally funded program that provides food or benefits to purchase food for low-income Iowans.

## Who Is Helped

### Food Assistance

People eligible for Food Assistance must:

- Be residents of Iowa.
- Be citizens or legally qualified non-citizens (such as refugees).
- Have household incomes not to exceed 160 percent of the federal poverty level. For a family of three, that equals a gross annual income of about \$31,000.

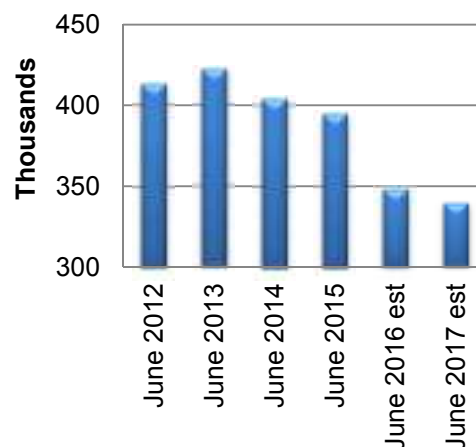
To provide more complete and accurate counts of households and recipients, DHS has made the following improvements, which are reflected in counts for SFY15 and future years:

- Counts are done mid-month following the report month rather than at the end of the report month as has been done in the past. For example, July counts are done mid-August.
  - About 2,000 households are in a closed status at the end of each month but are re-opened the following month.
  - Under the old counting method, these households would not be included and as a result, household and recipient counts have been understated.
- A new category for both households and recipients has been added based on participation in the Healthy and Well Kids in Iowa (*hawk-i*) program.
- Recipient counts are now based on each household member's participation status in other programs rather than the household category. Under the old method, if a household was categorized as FA and FIP, all FA recipients would also be categorized and counted as FA and FIP regardless of actual FIP status.

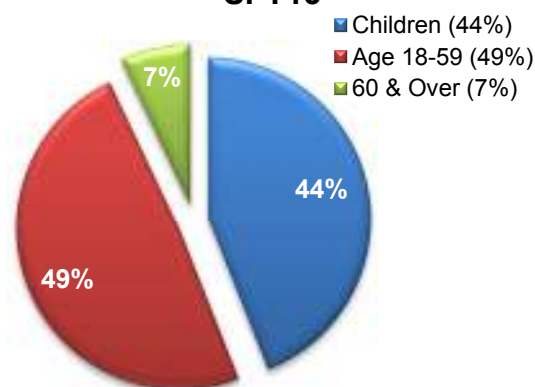
In SFY15:

- An average of 401,328 Iowans in 189,050 households received benefits every month, a 4.7 percent decrease from SFY14.
- 85 percent of FA recipients also receive Medicaid and/or Family Investment Program (FIP) benefits.
- The average recipient is a 26-year-old Caucasian female.

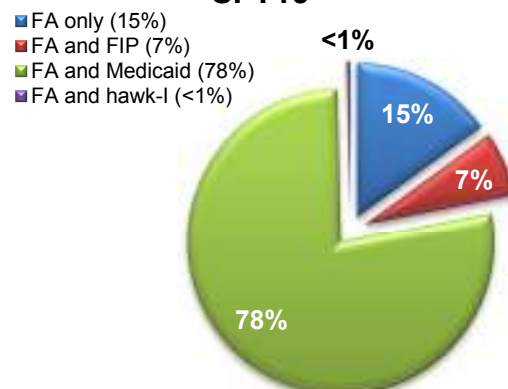
### FA Recipients

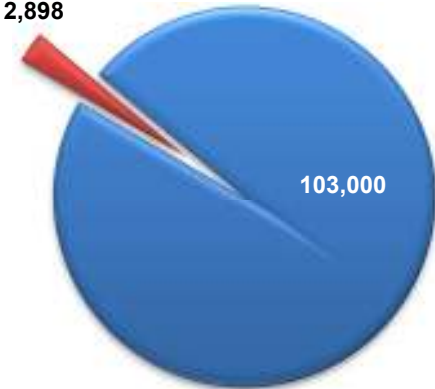



### Age of Recipients in SFY15



### Recipients by Program in SFY15



	<p><b>Supplemental Food Programs</b></p> <p>The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provide food to low-income Iowans.</p> <p>Due to a change in federal law, CSFP is now exclusively serving elderly, low-income Iowans. Low-income women and children, who were previously covered, are now being served by the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An average of 2,898 Iowans per month were served through CSFP and 865,588 pounds of commodities were distributed in SFY15.</li><li>• TEFAP served an average of 103,000 individuals per month and distributed 4.4 million pounds of food during SFY15.</li></ul>	<p><b>Monthly Average Recipients of TEFAP and CSFP SFY15</b></p> <p>■ TEFAP ■ CSFP</p>  <table><tr><th>Program</th><th>Monthly Average Recipients</th></tr><tr><td>TEFAP</td><td>103,000</td></tr><tr><td>CSFP</td><td>2,898</td></tr></table>	Program	Monthly Average Recipients	TEFAP	103,000	CSFP	2,898
Program	Monthly Average Recipients							
TEFAP	103,000							
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ <i>Having children is not a requirement to receive Food Assistance benefits.</i></li><li>✓ <i>People incarcerated more than 30 days are not eligible. Their families may continue to receive benefits if the household still meets eligibility requirements.</i></li><li>✓ <i>Requirements under the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) for individuals to obtain health care coverage and the increased availability of such coverage to Iowans under the Iowa Health and Wellness Plan, have caused a shift in household and recipient counts from FA Only to FA Medicaid. By the time this shift is complete, expected December 2016, FA Only households are projected to account for only 10 percent of all households receiving Food Assistance as compared to over 33 percent of all household in December 2012.</i></li></ul>							
Services	<p><b>Food Assistance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food Assistance benefits assure low-income Iowans have access to food.</li><li>• Benefits may only be used to purchase unprepared food and non-alcoholic beverages.</li><li>• All Food Assistance transactions occur electronically on Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. The card does not have cash benefits and will not work at ATMs.</li><li>• EBT cards may be used to buy food from 120 farmers at 91 different farmers markets across Iowa. This provides easy access to the freshest food Iowa has to offer.</li></ul> <p><b>Supplemental Food Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) distributes commodities directly to elderly recipients.</li><li>• The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) distributes food through food banks to low-income Iowans.</li></ul>	 <p><b>EBT Card Sample</b></p> <p><b>Average Benefits SFY15:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>\$229.37 per month per household</b></li><li>• <b>\$108.05 per month per individual</b></li><li>• <b>\$3.55 per day per individual</b></li><li>• <b>\$1.18 per meal</b></li></ul>						

### Employment and Training Program

This is a voluntary program through Food Assistance offering job seeking skills, classroom training, and structured employment search.

DHS is partnering with Kirkwood Community College, DMACC, and Southwestern Community College to provide services to those seeking training for employment.

### Nutrition Education

Written educational materials are provided to FA recipients to promote healthy food choices.

**Farmers Markets  
EBT Sales**



- ✓ *While Food Assistance may be used in any state, approximately 95 percent of benefits are used in Iowa or bordering states.*
- ✓ *DHS and the Department of Education partner to identify children who qualify for free school lunches based on the receipt of Food Assistance or FIP, or being in foster care.*
- ✓ *After a series of continuing resolutions extending the 2008 Farm Bill, the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79) was signed into law in February 2014. In addition to reauthorizing the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides federal funds and benefits for the Food Assistance program, the Act included a number of changes to SNAP. The department determined that none of these changes had a significant impact on caseloads or benefits for Iowa households getting Food Assistance.*

### Goals & Strategies

Goal: Improve efficiency and accuracy.

Strategies:

- Continue monitoring and training on key causes of errors.
- Implement new benefit eligibility and payment system.

Goal: Assure benefits are issued timely.

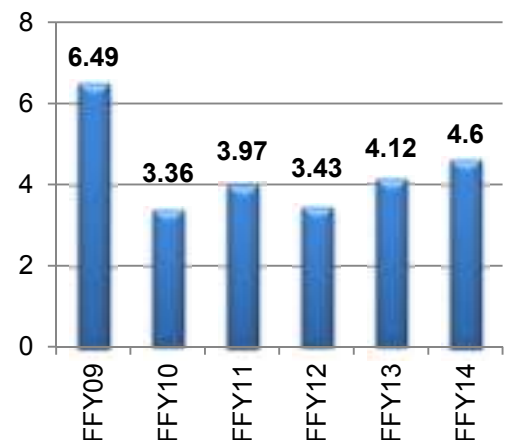
Strategy: Monitor performance.

Goal: Prevent fraud and abuse.

Strategies:

- Implement new methods to identify potential misuse of EBT cards.
- Identify and cancel benefits for ineligible individuals who are incarcerated.

**Percentage of Error  
Calculating Benefits**



DHS has selected a vendor to install a new eligibility system called the ELigibility Integrated Application Solution (ELIAS) to perform Medicaid, FA, and FIP eligibility functions. This system will also generate

		<p>FIP benefits and Medicaid eligibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current eligibility system is outdated and requires significant duplicate entries and work-arounds.</li> <li>• ELIAS will utilize current technology architecture to enable more accurate and timely eligibility determinations; more effective ways to identify potential fraud and abuse; and opportunities to link with online service applications.</li> <li>• In October 2013, the new system was implemented for a portion of the Medical Assistance programs. Work continues to add the remainder of the Medical Assistance programs, FIP, and Food Assistance to the new system.</li> </ul>
Legal Basis	<p><b>Federal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Federal Regulations: 7 CFR 272.2</li> <li>• The Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79).</li> <li>• Section 6 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2014 as amended by P.L. 113-79</li> </ul> <p><b>State:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iowa Administrative Code, 441 IAC 65</li> </ul>	